

CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2011
705 W. University Avenue, Council Auditorium

Commission members in attendance: Odon Bacque, Dale Bourgeois, Karen Carson, Bruce M Conque, George A. Lewis, Greg Manual, D. Keith Miller, Stephen J. Oats, Aaron Walker

Absent: None

Charter staff members in attendance: Pat Ottinger (City-Parish Attorney) and Veronica L. Williams (Charter Commission Clerk)

Council Members/Staff in attendance: Council Chair Jay Castille, Council Clerk Norma Dugas

Administration staff in attendance: City-Parish President Joey Durel, Chief Financial Officer Becky Lalumia, Director of Lafayette Utilities System Terry Huval

(5:30 p.m.) AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Call to order
Chair George Lewis called the meeting to order.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
Commissioner Bruce Conque was called upon to deliver the invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Comments/Announcements from Commission Members
There were no comments from the public.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Permission to forward drafts of separate charters to City-Parish Attorney and Bonding Attorney for their comments

Lewis stated that approval of this item would allow him to forward the two drafts, City of Lafayette Charter and the Parish of Lafayette Charter, to the Legal Department and bonding attorney for review. Ottinger asked if the Legal Department's scope of review included making stylistic formatting corrections, language changes and noting items that could promote a legal problem and Lewis responded affirmatively. Ottinger added that the department would not be making any substantive changes. Bourgeois asked if changes could be made after Legal's review and Lewis responded affirmatively.

Oats questioned how the Lafayette Public Utilities Authority (LPUA) issue would be addressed and Lewis responded that the draft charter for the City of Lafayette did not need to address that issue, inasmuch as the City Council would consider matters of the Lafayette Utilities System. Carson asked how long the review would take and Ottinger responded approximately two (2) to three (3) weeks. Within that time period the department anticipated having responses from the Attorney General.

A motion was offered by Bourgeois, seconded by Walker **to give permission to send the draft charters for the City of Lafayette and the Parish of Lafayette to the Lafayette City-Parish Attorney and the Bonding Attorney for their comments** and the vote was as follows:

YEAS: Bacque, Bourgeois, Carson, Conque, Lewis, Miller, Oats, Walker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Manuel

ABSTAIN: None

The motion was approved.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Overall discussion of approach to “tweaked” charter

Lewis stated that Mike Hefner, a demographer, had given a presentation to the Commission during the last meeting and provided an alternative to the existing Council makeup for consideration. The option would retain a 9-member body on the City-Parish Council, but would allow for five (5) districts located within the boundaries of the City of Lafayette, while the remaining (4) four would be elected from the Parish.

Conque stated he favored the 5-member Council for the City of Lafayette and questioned the following should the Hefner option be considered: Could the Commission request that the Council extend the term by 9-months; and, what would preclude the City of Lafayette from electing a mayor under this plan? Conque went on to explain that an extension would allow sufficient time to determine whether the option would work following the Council’s redistricting process. The Commission could go into an extended recess until it was determined whether the plan would work. Ottinger stated that he would study the question with reference to electing a mayor; however, he responded that if a Charter amendment was brought forward to accomplish same, he did not preliminarily foresee a problem with such a proposal.

Oats asked how the position of Mayor-President (City-Parish President) would be addressed and Conque responded that if a mayor were approved under this option, the next consideration would be to determine who would manage the parish. Bourgeois reminded that the data would be available by the end of February and questioned the need to extend for nine (9) additional months. Conque stated that more time was needed to confirm which redistricting plan would be adopted by the Council and approved by both the Justice Department and Secretary of State. Bacque was not sure there would be a need for a parish president or parish manager and concurred with Conque on making a request to extend the Commission’s time. On the question of “who should run the parish”, Bacque concurred with comments previously made by Durel, in that a manager may be more apt to run the parish without fear, whereby an elected official may not provide strong support for an unpopular issue, if said position could jeopardize their campaign.

Durel reiterated that the unincorporated area was guaranteed to shrink and cautioned the Commission on getting into too much detail on amending the Charter. He suggested that the Commission consider a formula and basic principle, for example that a Charter amendment would allow for having five (5) City districts at all times. Oats agreed with asking the Council to extend the term of the Commission for an additional 9-month period. Conque requested that a vote on same be placed on the agenda for consideration at the next meeting.

On the question of whether someone was needed to run the parish, Conrad Comeaux stated that citizens needed a full time person to call for parishwide issues. Bacque expressed concern that there was no coordination between the two (2) entities, which was a reason he favored a mayor-president. Walker concurred with the manager concept, given it would take the politics out of the position.

Lewis stated that the extension issue would be placed on the next agenda. Bacque questioned how the Utilities System would be addressed under the proposed Hefner option and Manuel explained that if the new plan were approved, LUS matters would be addressed under the 5-member City Council. Bacque and Walker favored a separate LUS board.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: General comments from the public on Consolidation

Dale Brasseaux stated that he did not support the option to extend the time and encouraged the Commission to move forward with their work. He added that the people wanted to vote and be given a choice.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Next meeting date

The next meeting was scheduled for January 31 to discuss whether to request an extension and amendments to the existing charter.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.